

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A method for accessing a plurality of bi-directional services that are transmitted over a cable television network, comprising:

presenting a program guide to at least one subscriber, the program guide comprising with at least one bi-directional service including availability information for each of the at least one bi-directional service to at least one subscriber, wherein the availability information includes one of available or unavailable;

receiving a request for a bi-directional service displayed in the program guide;

determining a current bandwidth consumption, and availability of the requested bi-directional service, and a schedule including bi-directional service rights for each subscriber;

dependent upon the determining step current bandwidth consumption and availability, rendering the bi-directional service, comprising the steps of:

maintaining real-time communications between a supplier of the requested bi-directional service and a requesting subscriber; and

monitoring the real-time communications by a bi-directional services server;

updating a bi-directional services database to reflect that the rendered bi-directional service is one of available or unavailable; and

populating and presenting an updated program guide with the at least one bi-directional service and updated availability information, wherein the at least one bi-directional service is maintained in and periodically updated in the program guide by the bi-directional services database.

2. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps step of receiving a request for further information regarding the requested bi-directional service and transmitting the information to the requestor, wherein the information comprises at least one of description of the bi-directional service, supplier name, rating, duration, availability times, pricing, calendar window comprising a start date and an end date, and geographical location of the supplier.

3. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of querying the bi-directional services database to ensure the requested bi-directional service is available, and if available, querying the schedule including bi-directional service rights for each subscriber, wherein the rights for a bi-directional service include at least one of bandwidth allocation, duration, recording rights, start time, and picture quality.

4. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein receiving a request from a subscriber for a bi-directional service comprises at least one of a bi-directional communication session between the subscriber and at least one other subscriber associated with the requested bi-directional service, a bi-directional communication session to purchase a viewable option of the requested bi-directional service; or a bi-directional communication session to purchase a recordable option of the requested bi-directional service.

5. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:
receiving a second request for an available bi-directional service displayed in the program guide;
determining the current bandwidth consumption;
dependent upon the determined bandwidth consumption, transmitting the second requested bi-directional service; ~~and~~
updating the availability information in the bi-directional services database; and
presenting an updated program guide including the second requested bi-directional service availability information.

6. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 5, further comprising the steps of:
if a displayed bi-directional service is not available due to the unavailability of the bi-directional service, receiving a schedule request for future consumption of the requested bi-directional service; and
if a displayed bi-directional service is not available due to the current bandwidth consumption, receiving a request for one of future consumption of the requested bi-directional service at a first price or a request for immediate consumption of the requested bi-directional service at a second price.

7. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 6, further comprising the step of providing notification when the bi-directional service is available, wherein the notification of the previously unavailable bi-directional service comprises displaying a notice on a currently displayed program.

8 - 11. (Canceled)

12. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of continuously updating the bi-directional services in the program guide to display availability information for each of the plurality of bi-directional services.

13. (Currently Amended) A system for accessing a plurality of bi-directional services over a cable television network comprising:

means for receiving availability information from at least one remote supplier subscriber related to a plurality of bi-directional services;

means for populating a bi-directional services database with the availability information related to the plurality of bi-directional services;

means for presenting a program guide to a plurality of subscribers, wherein the program guide displays the plurality of bi-directional services along with the availability information;

means for receiving a request from at least one of the plurality of subscribers for at least one available bi-directional service displayed in the program guide;

means for determining a current bandwidth consumption and bi-directional service rights of the requesting subscriber, wherein the bi-directional service rights for a bi-directional service include at least one of a duration, recording rights, start time, end time, bandwidth, and picture quality;

dependent upon the current bandwidth consumption and the bi-directional service rights, means for enabling a bi-directional communication session between at least one of the plurality of subscribers and a remote supplier subscriber based on the requested bi-directional service;

means for rendering the available bi-directional service, wherein real-time communications is established between the remote supplier and the at least one of the plurality of subscribers, and wherein the real-time communications between the remote supplier and the at least one of plurality of subscribers is monitored by a bi-directional services server;

means for generating an updated bi-directional services database to reflect that the requested at least one bi-directional service has been rendered and is one of available or unavailable; and

means for retransmitting the program guide including the updated bi-directional services to the plurality of subscribers.

14. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 13, wherein the updated bi-directional services database is updated by information received from the at least one remote supplier subscriber.

U. S. Patent Application Serial No. 09/896,470
Inventor: Arturo A. Rodriguez

15-31. (Canceled)